

FOREWORD

The Ministerial Advisory Committee on Co-operation was established in February 1984 to advise the Victorian Government on appropriate policies and legislation for the Victorian co-operative movement.

The co-operative philosophy is stated by the International Co-operative Alliance in the following way:

“The common element at all times has been that co-operation at its best aims at something beyond promotion of the interests of the individual members who compose a co-operative at any time. Its object is rather to promote the progress and welfare of humanity. It is this aim that makes a co-operative society something different from an ordinary economic enterprise and justifies its being tested, not simply from the standpoint of its business efficiency, but also from the standpoint of its contribution to the moral and social values which elevate human life above the merely material and animal”.

This philosophy is similar to that behind the Government's social justice strategy and its economic development policy: the vision of a society that is both prosperous and fair, where every person and all families have a chance to grow, to participate and to share.

The co-operative movement has a long and proud history throughout the world. It is an important and growing third sector of the Victorian economy and society.

The Government's Financial Institutions Review, and its Economic Strategy for Victoria, both support the growth of Victorian industry with assistance from, but minimal regulation by, the Government.

This report is consistent with those earlier initiatives in that it recommends strong action by the Government, in close consultation with the co-operative movement, to provide development assistance to co-operative enterprise, and a program of education in co-operative principles and practice in Victorian schools.

We believe it is vital for all Victorians already involved in the co-operative movement, and those who would wish to be if they knew of its benefits, to work together in a constructive and cohesive way. The process which led to this report was an example of what can be achieved if co-operators co-operate with each other and with the Government, to further the co-operative cause. Without such a joint approach, little will be achieved.

We give our thanks to the members of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Co-operation, the working parties, government departments, statutory bodies, the Co-operative Federation of Victoria, the Victorian Credit Co-operative Association, the Federation of

Housing Societies of Victoria, and the many individual co-operatives and co-operators who gave so much time and thought to this exercise.

We hope this report will stimulate informed public debate, and lead to a more broadly based and strengthened co-operative movement, enlightened government policies, and appropriate legislation.

Frank Wilkes,
Minister for Housing,
Minister Administering the Co-operation Act.

Race Mathews,
Minister for the Arts,
Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Andrew McCutcheon,
Minister for Property and Services,
Minister for Water Resources.